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SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Sometimes, it takes a team of lawyers to help homeless

Public defenders have new task in pandemic: handing out care packages at encampments

PHOTOS BY RANDY VAZQUEZ — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Deputy Santa Clara County Public Defender Meghan Piano hands a care package to Ana Leonard in a homeless encampment in San Jose on May 13. The care packages include face masks, hand sanitizer, soap, cookies and candy.

By Marisa Kendall
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At a time when a terrifying pandemic has stranded thousands of homeless Bay Area residents with limited access to help, Deputy Public Defender Andy Gutierrez had a simple mission: Deliver the oranges.

Transporting fruit is not typically one of Gutierrez's job duties for Santa Clara County, where, pre-pandemic, he focused on preparing inmates for their parole hearings. Neither is visiting the county's many homeless encampments and asking: Is anyone sick? Are people wearing face masks? Do you know about COVID-19?

But after homeless services pulled back over worries about the spreading virus, Gutierrez and three of his fellow lawyers stepped in to help a population that has grown by nearly a third in Santa Clara County since 2017 and is expected to become larger in the aftermath of the coronavirus-fueled economic crisis.

Once a week, Gutierrez, Meghan Piano, Ashanti Mitchell and Jennifer Redding hand out 100 care packages of potentially life-saving face masks, hand sanitizer and soap, as well as comforts like cookies, candy and cards with cheerful messages hand-drawn by local children.

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Angel Rosas, who is homeless, was told by the lawyers that she'd be a prime candidate for one of the hotel rooms the county is reserving for homeless residents likely to get very sick if they contract COVID-19.

Lawyers, including Community Outreach Attorney Ashanti Mitchell, left, and Assistant Public Defender Damon Silver, also make sure homeless residents know about services.

CORONAVIRUS

Goals for nursing facilities go unmet

White House recommendation for testing of all home residents, staff in 14 days won't happen

By Alan Suderman
The Associated Press

RICHMOND, VA. » Nearly two weeks ago the White House urged governors to ensure that every nursing home resident and staff member be tested for the coronavirus within 14 days.

It's not going to happen.

A review by The Associated Press found that at least half of the states are not going to meet White House's deadline and some aren't even bothering to try.

Only a handful of states, including West Virginia and Rhode Island, have said they've already tested every nursing home resident.

Many states said the logistics, costs and manpower needs are too great to test all residents and staff in a two-week window. Some say they need another week or so, while others say they need much more time. California, the most populous state, said it is still working to release a plan that would ensure testing capacity for all residents and staff at skilled nursing facilities statewide.

And still other states are questioning whether testing every nursing home resident and staff, regardless of any other factors, is a good use of time and money.

"At this time it would be fairly useless to do that," said Nebraska Chief Medical Officer Dr. Gary Anthone, adding that the state would have to repeat the tests almost daily to get more than a snapshot in time, and the state doesn't have the capacity when there are others who need to be tested.

Anthone said the state was going to stick with the CDC's guidelines, which call for testing individually when nursing home residents show symptoms or collectively if there is a new confirmed case of COVID-19 in a home.

> **"All of this is probably not as well thought out as it could have been. It sounds more like an impulsive type of directive rather than one that has been completely vetted by providers on the ground."**
>
> *— Dr. Jim Wright, medical director at a Virginia nursing home*

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MEMORIAL DAY

Pandemic curtails tributes to vets

Union City man still will take time to honor those he fought with in WWII

By Peter Hegarty
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UNION CITY » More than three-quarters of a century has passed, but for George Wilkerson, his memories remain as fresh as the breezes that swept off the Pacific Ocean when he served in World War II.

Back then, Wilkerson was not long out of high school and a corporal with the Army Air Corps, stationed at Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands and tasked

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JAMES MACRAE — MASONIC HOMES OF CALIFORNIA

George Wilkerson, 95, is a World War II veteran who served with the Army Air Corps stationed at Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands.

DINE-IN SERVICE

Restaurants are open again — at least in Napa

After two months of closure, owners are relieved, diners happy

By Joan Morris
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The excitement in the air was palpable.

So was the aroma of garlic fries.

Food, freed from the prisons of paper and plastic to-go containers, was brought to tables, fresh and hot and served on plates.

Dine-in service at eateries in Napa County, one of the few places in the Bay Area to move into the next phase of recovery, returned last week.

Though the scene looks much different than we're used to — with social distancing and some caveats — many took the reemergence Sunday as a sign that the end of the long self-quarantine period was in sight.

"It feels a bit more like normalcy," said Jen Jes of Chico. "It's been too long."

Jes and two friends drove to Napa on Sunday, partly to get out of the house, and largely to eat garlic fries and burgers in

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